
INSTRUCTIONS

TO THE

SPECIAL AGENTS

OF THE

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

OF THE

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA.



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INSTRUCTIONS.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
1861.

To

Special Agent:

SIR: The office of Special Agent of this Department embraces a wide range of important and responsible duties, for the due performance of which a thorough knowledge of the laws and regulations of the Department is indispensable. If you are not already familiar with those now in force, it is recommended that you become so as rapidly as possible, so that you may not only conform your own official conduct thereto, but may be qualified to instruct Postmasters, and all others in the employment of the Department, as to their several duties, in cases of doubt or question.

As the pecuniary resources of the Department are about to be limited to its own proper revenues, it is now, especially the duty of each officer and employee of the Department, in his own sphere of observation, to see that no unnecessary expense is either made, or suffered to remain, chargeable upon those revenues, without being brought to the special notice of the Postmaster General. The nature of your duties will offer you an extended field of observation, and may enable you to point out cases where the transportation of the mail over particular routes may either be diminished or dispensed with altogether without material injury to the public interests. In those sec-

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tions of the country remote from the central administration of the Department, where the increase of railroad service has been the most rapid—superseding the old established coach and horse routes—instances will perhaps still be found where the expense of double service is incurred, and where the old contract service should either be abolished or superseded by messenger service. You will report fully and frankly every case in which economical reforms can, in your judgment, be advantageously made in this branch of the service.

In respect to the service of route agents, also, your attention will be directed to a reduction of the number of agents now employed, by dispensing with so much of this service as is not absolutely necessary for the safety of the mails and the reasonable accommodation of the public on important routes, and by requiring such necessary service to be performed by a sufficient number of agents only, dispensing with the service of supernumeraries. Your observation and suggestions on this subject should be freely communicated to the Department.

MAIL DEPREDACTIONS.

The investigation of reported mail depredations, or losses by mail, will necessarily occupy a large portion of your time, and will require the constant exercise of your utmost vigilance and skill; but as in the performance of this duty you may frequently have occasion to pass over long lines of mail transportation, and to visit numerous Post Offices, you will at the same time be enabled to give more or less attention to the general condition of the postal service on your line of travel, and to such of its particulars as will hereinafter be enumerated.

Your commission as Special Agent of this Department will pass you free over all mail routes where conveyance of passengers is provided for by the contractors; but if in the performance of the pressing duties of your agency you should at any time find it necessary or clearly expedient to procure private conveyance, or to pay your fare on a passenger route, you will charge the expense of such conveyance in your next monthly or quarterly account, and accompany it with proper explanations and vouchers. If in any case the contractor on any mail route (whether by railroad or otherwise) refuses you a free passage over the same, after the exhibition of your commission, you will pay the fare demanded, taking a receipt therefor if possible, and will charge the same in your account. If no such voucher can be obtained the charge must be verified by your affidavit, in which you will, when the fare has been paid to a railroad company, clearly describe such company by its proper style and title, instead of giving merely the termini of the route passed over. You are entrusted with keys to the several mail locks now in use, and are, by virtue of your commission, and these instructions, authorized to open and examine the mails whenever and wherever, in the pursuit of your investigations, you may find it necessary to do so. You are also empowered to enter and examine any Post Office when, in your judgment, the success of your investigations, the safety of the mails, or the general interests of the service demand such examination. You will carefully investigate every case of alleged mail depredation referred to you from this Department, acknowledging to the Inspection Office the receipt of the papers in each by its number, and will return the papers to him after investigation, with a separate report in each case. You will also

investigate and report upon such cases of mail depredation as may be made known to you by Postmasters, or by parties interested, when such cases are within the ordinary geographical range of your duties; and when they are not, you will see that they are duly referred to the special agent who, from his locality, can most conveniently investigate them. In every case of successful investigation you will communicate the result to the person who originally reported the case—whether to yourself or to the Department.

It is not possible for the Department to instruct you as to the particular means to be used in discovering the exact locality of an ascertained theft from the mail, or in ferreting out and arresting the perpetrator. These must be as various as the circumstances which surround each case, and must be left to the intelligence, vigilance, ingenuity, and acuteness of the agent charged with each investigation. There are, however, certain qualities and habits which are absolutely indispensable to a proper and successful discharge of this class of his official duties. Foremost among these are self-control, perseverance, caution, and *silence* on the subject of his employment and operations. A special agent of this Department should, when travelling, attract as little notice as possible, and should conceal his official character whenever and wherever such concealment can be practiced, and should, of course, refrain from announcing it on hotel books and other public registers. He should, as well *after* as before a successful investigation, prevent as far as he can, publicity being given to the means by which his success was achieved; for by this publicity the same means may become inoperative and valueless in another case.

When an arrest is made, the prisoner should be put in

charge of the regular law officers of the government as early as possible. If his examination cannot conveniently be had before a judge or commissioner of the Confederate States, he should be taken before the nearest justice of the peace or other State authority competent to examine and bind him over for trial. As justices of the peace have in many cases declined to issue warrants, or to enter upon such examination, from a doubt as to their jurisdiction, the Special Agent should be prepared to remove such doubt by referring them to the provisions on this subject contained in the 33d section of the act of 24th September, 1789, and in the 37th section of the act of March 3, 1825. When in the judgment of a Special Agent it is absolutely necessary that he should employ counsel for the protection of the interests of the Confederate States at such preliminary examination, such counsel should be engaged to prosecute the case for a stipulated fee, which should not exceed that usually paid for like service rendered in cases arising in the same vicinage under the State laws. A report of the result of such examination should be promptly made to the Inspection Office, and should especially show whether the proceedings were completed in one day or were continued from day to day, and how long.

A Special Agent who is without experience in the performance of his duties, should, as soon as possible after his appointment, spend sufficient time in a well-regulated and considerable Post Office to acquaint himself fully with the routine duties of such office, in respect to the reception, separation, and distribution of mails, the boxing and delivery of letters, and the making up, billing, and despatching of mails. He should also improve the first opportunity afforded him of conferring and advising

with some more experienced agent of the Department as to the best means of performing the duties required of him, especially those which relate to the tracing of depredations on the mail.

TRANSPORTATION OF THE MAILS.

The efficiency and usefulness of a Special Agent in the performance of his duties in *any* branch of the service of the Department, must greatly depend on the extent of his general knowledge of the mail service of the country, and his minute and particular knowledge of that in the district or region of country to which his duties are principally confined. He should know accurately the connection of routes, and the grade of service required on each. To this end, if you have not them already in your possession, you should apply to the Contract Bureau for and obtain pamphlet copies of the last advertisement of mail lettings in the sections where you are principally employed, and should keep them with you for constant reference, noting upon them from time to time such changes as may come to your knowledge.

RAILROAD SERVICE.

In passing to and over railroad routes you will carefully observe what arrangements are made for the safety of the mails while being conveyed between the several Post Offices and the railroad stations or mail cars; and also while passing from one route to another, and how they are disposed of *in* the cars. On roads where there are route agents, see if suitable accommodations are provided for the safe and convenient assorting and bagging of the mails.

When there are no such agents on the route, notice closely *who is* charged with the custody of the mails; whether they are placed under lock, beyond the reach of any but duly authorized persons, and generally, whether proper provision is made for their safety in all respects. Especially see that all persons employed by the railroad companies in the transfer or custody of the mails are qualified by oath as carriers. It is known that several, and it is believed that many entire mails have been stolen while the contents of one mail car were being transferred to another. This has been done during the confusion of such transfer even where two roads were connected by a continuous track, and the danger of theft is greatly increased where there is a considerable portage between the two trains. Such transfer should, therefore, *always* be made with the utmost care and watchfulness, and, when occurring in the night, should not be attempted until *abundant light shall have been furnished and properly distributed or stationed*. Special Agents are earnestly desired to give heed to this matter, and to *see* that ample and certain provision is made for such light beforehand. You will, if possible, effect arrangements for keeping all the letter mails under the view of a Route Agent or Local Agent during such transfer. Such arrangements are supposed now to exist in respect to all mails arriving *in charge* of a Route Agent, or where a Local Agent is stationed, but provision must be made for the safety of the mails under all ordinary circumstances, and you will make it your special duty to see whether Route Agents, who consider themselves "off duty" at the ends of their respective routes, may not properly be required to superintend the transfer of all mails which arrive by railroad at their locality during their vacation.

You will probably find that many of these agents hold themselves responsible for the safe transfer of such mails only as arrive in their charge, and consider themselves exempt from all public duty during the whole interval of time (whether long or short) when they are not actually passing over their routes. In such cases, after satisfying yourself that it will impose on them no hardship, you are authorized to require their performance of this slight additional service, and will promptly report any refusal on their part. It is believed that in many cases the safety of the mails may thus be materially promoted, without exacting any thing unreasonable from these agents. Where no such arrangement is practicable, it should be carefully seen that the messengers of the railroad company are every way reliable and competent.

STEAMBOAT SERVICE.

See that the mails on steamboats are locked up in a suitable apartment, under the exclusive control of the Route Agent, when one is on board, and otherwise under the control of some person designated for the purpose by the contractors, and duly qualified by oath. Such person should be made clearly to understand that he is in no case to allow the mails to pass from his charge into that of any unauthorized person. Make prompt and special report of every case in which you observe mails exposed on the deck of a steamer during her passage.

COACH AND HORSE SERVICE.

On coaches and hacks see that the mail is secured from wet or other injury in a boot under the driver's seat, or, if its weight and bulk require it, in the body of the carriage, *to the exclusion of passengers if necessary.*

The leaving or dropping of the mail, or any portion of it, in order to convey passengers, is punishable by exemplary fines. You will investigate every case of this kind that may in any way come to your knowledge, and will report it fully to the Inspection Office. Where buggy or horse-back service is performed, see that the mails are protected by suitable waterproof coverings, and, in respect to all these modes of service, observe well the condition of horses and carriages and the qualifications and deportment of drivers and carriers, reporting deficiencies in either.

DUTIES AT POST OFFICES.

At Post Offices terminating routes, examine the prescribed schedules and modes of conveyance; compare them with the actual arrivals, departures, and grades of service, and note any irregularities discovered. Observe whether any errors have been inadvertently embraced in schedules, or whether any other defective arrangements exist in the transportation service, causing delays or failures of connection, and suggest promptly and intelligently the proper changes and remedies. Visit frequently, and without previous notice, the distributing offices, and examine carefully their accounts of mails sent and received to and from other distributing offices, especially to ascertain whether letters are so mailed as to be subject to two or more distributions, *in violation of the regulations and of special instructions by circular.*

At each principal Post Office, observe whether the Postmaster gives his personal attention to its business; and if not, whether such watchful supervision is exercised over it by *anybody* as to secure subordination, method, and personal accountability among the force employed in

it, without which there can be no security to the correspondence passing through it.

Admonish Postmasters, when necessary, against suffering *any persons* not employed *in* their offices to have access to the mails when in process of opening, separating, distributing, or otherwise; and against allowing *any person* not duly qualified and authorized, to have access to the tables and cases where letters are deposited.

These prohibitions include Route Agents, Mail Carriers, Letter Carriers, and all other persons who may have been sworn for the performance of *other* service to the Department.

Observe at all offices whether incapable or otherwise unreliable and unsafe persons are employed in them, and report the result of your observation to the Appointment Office when in your opinion it is proper to do so.

Prevent as far as possible by admonition and advice the exposure of the mails at small roadside offices by the opening and separating them in public rooms and in the presence of the neighbors, and report every flagrant abuse of this sort which you cannot cure. Ascertain by observation and inquiry at distributing offices, and by such other means as may occur to you, whether packages of postage stamps are sent from any Post Offices, or by any Route Agents, in the unlocked bags or newspaper sacks, and report every case in which you find that either such packages or letter packages are so sent. Notice at Post Offices the mode practiced of canceling postage stamps, and report every case in which the instructions of the Department in that regard are violated.

ROUTE AGENTS.

Route Agents should be men of strict integrity, business capacity, and correct habits. If any are observed by you

who fail to meet these requirements, report them with the particulars of their several cases to the Appointment Bureau.

When you find the place of a regular Route Agent filled by a substitute, ascertain whether the substitution has been made conformably with the regulations of the Department; and if not, do not hesitate or fail to report the case without delay. It is not allowable for a Route Agent to leave his duties in charge of a substitute, except under the most urgent circumstances, without leave being first granted by the Postmaster General, on a written application to the Appointment Bureau, and such leave will be in writing for a specified time, the limitation of which must be strictly observed.

When a sudden and urgent necessity arises for the temporary absence of a Route Agent from his duties—allowing no sufficient time for a reference of his application to the Department—a Postmaster at the end of his route may grant leave for such absence; but only on a written application, which he will refer to the Department for approval by the first mail thereafter, and the leave thus granted must be limited to the shortest time in which such application can reach, and be returned from the Department by mail.

Route Agents are forbidden to admit into the mail cars in their charge *any* persons who are not agents of this Department. You are desired to see that this rule is strictly enforced, and will report, without exception, every instance that may come to your knowledge of its violation.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Observe the condition of mail bags, and enforce as far as possible that regulation of the Department which requires Postmasters at the ends of routes to withdraw from

the service all that are too much worn, or from any other cause are unsafe. Endeavor to enforce also the regulation which requires the return of canvas sacks sent out from the principal cities with newspapers and other printed matter. Notice whether and how mail keys are securely kept in Post Offices, and correct any careless habits which you may observe in that regard.

Ascertain as far as possible and report violations of law by private expresses or by other persons in sending or carrying mailable matter over established routes out of the mail, and suggest any improvements in the service calculated to remedy or abate this evil.

In respect to all the foregoing instructions you are desired in every case where a flagrant abuse or imperfection in the service is discovered to make immediate report thereof to the Department, and in urgent and important cases to use the telegraph if you deem it necessary, but when the cause of complaint is slight, and can be corrected by your advice or admonition, no special report of the case need be made. You will, however, keep from day to day a brief but accurate journal in which you will enter your observation or other knowledge of any neglect of duty, or violation of the regulations of the Department, in any branch of the service—by Postmasters, Mail Contractors, Route Agents, or any other persons—so that a transcript of this journal will exhibit all the reports required by these several articles of instruction, and all notices of irregularities or imperfections in the service, with suggestions for their improvement, as they may have fallen under your observation or otherwise become known to you from day to day. These journals must also show the locality and manner of employment of each agent on the several days of each month, and must indicate the

depredation cases in the investigation of which he is engaged, and the progress of his investigation. Each agent will forward to the Department with his monthly account, or as soon after the beginning of each month as practicable, a transcript of so much of this journal as may not have been previously communicated to it in special reports. These transcripts should be addressed to the Inspection Office, to be filed subject to the inspection of the proper officers of the Department. When, however, an occasion arises for a special report to the Department, it should, if relating to confidential matters or the general interests of the Department, be addressed directly to the Postmaster General, and otherwise to the head of that bureau of the Department to which its subject-matter may especially relate; and when matters relating to several branches of the service are to be treated of at the same time, separate reports should be made, each to its proper bureau. For a description of the powers and duties of each bureau, see printed "Laws and Regulations" of the Department.

When a Special Agent is assigned for duty to a particular district or section of country, he will not, except in a case of absolute necessity, or in the pursuit of some special investigation in the line of his duty, withdraw himself from his district to visit the seat of government, or otherwise, without instructions or leave from this Department. When he has no special and urgent duties to perform under the *particular* instructions of the Department, as can rarely happen, he should still avoid remaining unnecessarily long at his place of residence, but should keep moving over the several routes in his district, especially those which, from their importance, or otherwise, require the most strict surveillance. His salary and

expense account may be forwarded for settlement at the end of each month or quarter, as he may elect, addressed to the Inspection Office.

In conclusion, the Postmaster General invites your earnest and active co-operation in the endeavors to which he will devote himself, to give security to the mails, to prevent unnecessary delays and detentions in their transportation, to elevate the character of the POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT for faithfulness, efficiency, and punctuality in the several branches of its service, and thus to secure a more perfect accomplishment of the extended and beneficent objects for which it was established. To these high purposes he asks and expects the devotion of your whole time and best efforts.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

Postmaster General.



